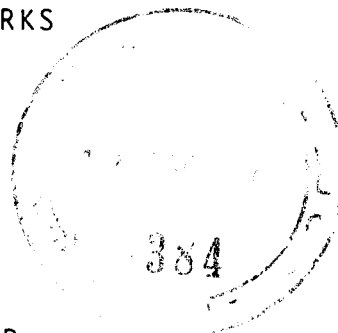


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NOTES FOR REMARKS

BY



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to the

14TH STUDENT COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE

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Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies the Commonwealth High Commissioners to Canada, Members of Parliament, and - especially - the Delegates to this 14th Student Commonwealth Conference.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be with you this Oslo midnight. I promise to finish by 2:00 a.m.!

Participants in international meetings normally travel considerable distances to attend. The smarter ones endeavour to arrive at least a day ahead of time to gather their thoughts. I leave it to you to measure the intelligence of a dinner speaker who flies almost 5000 miles and arrives too late for the main course.

I've been asked to talk to you, but I'd like you to think about the function, and the purpose, of talking. Talking is sometimes employed to fill in time. There's often no other way of describing what disc-jockeys do, for example. Talking should be, however, a form of communication. Human beings communicate with one another in all kinds of ways, of course - from smoke signals to

satellites. They employ words, images, data, and gestures. Messages range in quality from understatement to unintentional error to deliberate falsehood. And, in a political city such as Ottawa, one should add as well hyperbole.

I suppose its only natural that the greater the distance between two communicating individuals, or the greater their anonymity, the more easy - and the more likely - is the introduction of exaggeration or falsehood. Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian who was the world's outstanding pioneer in this subject, argued that the introduction of the printing press, with its capacity to make thousands of copies, and which permitted for the first time an individual to communicate with large numbers of persons far away, marked the real beginning of deception in human communications. Because the ascertainment of truth in these circumstances was difficult, he said, the credibility of the message was in doubt. McLuhan made that argument in his first book "The Gutenberg Galaxy."

Everyone of us was raised with fairy tales, or with Dr. Seuss. Everyone of us is enchanted with make

believe, whether it's "Anne of Green Gables," "The Lord of the Rings" or "The Empire Strikes Back." And everyone of us understands the value and the strength and the richness of great literature or theatre or film. But everyone of us, too, knows the critical importance of finding the line between fact and fiction, between reality and deception, between verity and falsehood. And for those who forget, there are libel laws to remind them.

Even in the best of circumstances, it's not always easy to determine what's accurate and what isn't, what's the whole truth and what's something less. You have probably heard of the lady who received a handwritten note from a friend but couldn't decipher it. Her husband suggested she take it to a pharmacist. "After all," he said, "they're able to understand doctors' handwriting, no matter how illegible." The lady did so, but just as she handed over the note, and before she could explain the circumstances, the telephone rang in the dispensary and the druggist excused himself. A few moments later he reappeared, handed her a bottle of pills and said "Take two before meals."

Then there was the poor fellow who was writing a United States civil service exam and misread the question: "Do you favour the overthrow of the government by force, subversion or violence?" He thought it was a multiple-choice question, and answered "violence."

Before you arrived here in Ottawa to participate in this extraordinary conference, you all did a good deal of preparatory reading. And I'm confident that most of you found that there was more than one version of certain of the events you read about. For students of history this is commonplace, and contributes excitement to their examination of what really happened in the Tower of London between Richard and the two little princes in 1483; whether the Vikings really preceded Columbus<sup>ll</sup> across the Atlantic by several centuries; what was the real explanation of the acts of Louis Riel.

Important as it is to run firmly to ground facts of this kind, in the nuclear age in which we live it's not just important, its critical to our continued existence that facts be determined quickly and accurately. Treachery and exaggeration make great entertainment on "Dallas" or in a

Richard Rohmer novel. When events are unfolding around the world which can quickly lead to disastrous results, however, it is vital that world leaders - and the rest of us, too - know who is speaking the truth, who is deliberately lying, who is resorting to evasion or exaggeration. What happened and is happening in Afghanistan or Lebanon or Nicaragua or Libya is important to us now. Which leaders are to be trusted, which explanations to be accepted, which versions to be believed - these are serious questions. But they are not questions that can always be answered by reading the newspapers or by watching television. McLuhan knew that. And now, after your experience here, you know it, too.

If you have ever engaged in debates or arguments, you know that there is no effective substitute for eye-ball to eye-ball contact. In this country we are the proud beneficiaries of legal and political traditions that have come down to us through the centuries, which were crafted and perfected to get at the truth. In our criminal courts, the accused enjoys the fundamental legal right of facing his or her accuser. In our Parliament, the Prime Minister and his or her Ministers face on a daily basis the questions of the opposition parties. In each instance,

truth and accountability are the underlying principles; they are enshrined in our constitution, and are a precious attribute of our way of life. In this country we do not permit trials by headlines. We distrust government by press releases. We prefer, even if we do not realize it, the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians.

In the tombs of the pharaohs there are depictions of a Goddess whose task it was to weigh the heart of a deceased and judge whether the soul was entitled to enter heaven. The criterion of decision was truth. The Goddess Maat was the Goddess of Truth and Justice. The Egyptians of the age of Tutankhamen, 5,000 years ago, knew that you can't have one without the other. Canadians know, too, that justice - in the sense of just or fair decisions - cannot exist unless based on accuracy, on the facts, on the whole truth.

In the conduct of international affairs, it may even be tougher to get at the facts than it is at the pearly gates. That's so because there's more likelihood that some of the major actors will choose consciously to over-simplify complicated situations, to admit or deny facts on a

selective basis, to engage in tendentious hyperbole or propaganda. If it's tough for ordinary folks to get at the truth in close-to-home situations, it's a lot tougher for Presidents and Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers to do so in international circumstances. How do these people break through the complex and often-misleading rhetoric? How do they come to wise decisions?

Well, you're about to experience what in my judgement is one of the best possible ways. A person to person conference, designed to allow leaders to talk with one another in one common language, watch one another, judge one another in a series of formal and informal circumstances, and to do so in a time period that gives them adequate opportunity to sort out the wheat from the chaff and to put events and individuals in a balanced perspective. There's only one such forum in the world today that meets all those criteria. It's the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

Only there, not at the OAU or the OAS, not at the Western Economic Summits, not in the Warsaw Pact, and certainly not in fleeting bilateral summit meetings, do all



of the ingredients come together to permit the kind of result that is essential to wise, prudent statesmanship in the international arena.

Lest you think I'm just trying to make you feel good on this occasion, let me add that I speak from experience. I had the extraordinary good fortune, over a period of 10 years, to sit either beside or immediately behind the Prime Minister of Canada at five Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings, at two Industrialized Country Economic Summits, at two NATO Summits, at several other international gatherings of leaders such as the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and at innumerable bilateral meetings with heads of government in Ottawa and elsewhere: Washington and Moscow, Paris and Beijing, Tokyo and Havana, and a host of other places. None of these fora in my judgement are as effective as Commonwealth Conferences.

If I'm right, or even if I'm only partly right, it's important to identify the factors that lead to that result; important to be accurate in any description of what's involved; and important to be demanding of others,

such as journalists, that they not be sloppy in their references. Unless we're accurate, we'll not benefit from the lesson.

There are many descriptions of the Commonwealth, some more useful than others. Here is the way that Pierre Trudeau talked of it when he opened the Heads of Government meeting in Ottawa on August 2, 1973:

"In this forum of discussion each Commonwealth member is equal. None is senior; none is superior. None is distinguished by economic self-sufficiency; none is possessed of all political virtue. In our discussions the next few days, I have no doubt that we will be able to demonstrate to one another and to the world the advantages of our dissimilarity, the richness of our diversity, the excitement of our variety. We will be able to do so because we are members of an association, not an institution. In this Commonwealth there is no structure to contain us, there are no fetters to chafe us. The Commonwealth is a reflection of

its 32 members and of their desire to consult and cooperate with one another. There is no artificial adhesive. Nor is there any voting, any constitution, any flag, any headquarters. This association is neither regional in nature, nor specialized in its interests. The Commonwealth is an organism and this fact guarantees both its vitality and its flexibility....

"The word Commonwealth has been employed again and again by scholars, writers and statesmen over a period of several thousand years. The concept has varied widely in the minds of such persons as Plato, Locke, and Oliver Cromwell, yet none of those concepts has met so well the acid test of practical application and value as has the one which brings us together in Ottawa this week. To contemporary observers and, I am confident, to future historians, the word Commonwealth shall be irrevocably associated with the desire of free men and women representing more than a quarter of the world's

population to gather, to discuss, and to understand."

And how does all this affect you? A good deal. Perhaps more than it affects my generation. George Bernard Shaw wrote: "It's all that the young can do for the old, to shock them and keep them up to date." Keep those words in mind. They will be useful to you at least to the age of thirty! In that interval you must come to grips with the fact that we live in a period of immense change, that unless this is understood, that unless our responses are appropriate, we will contribute to increasingly perilous circumstances.

I'd like to quote a paragraph from the second report of the Brandt Commission, the one that bears the dateline 'Ottawa, Canada' because it was here - in the premises of IDRC actually - that the Commission completed its work and issued its report. The paragraph emphasizes the importance of accurate information, sound diplomacy, and wise decisions. It says:

"Our situation is unique. Never before was the survival of mankind itself at stake; and never before was mankind capable of destroying itself, not only as the possible outcome of a world-wide arms race, but as a result of uncontrolled exploitation and destruction of global resources as well."

To pretend that this juncture is not upon us is barren, as a conscious decision to ignore it is foolish. We accept the challenge and we flourish, or we deny it and we perish.

Attitudinal changes of that magnitude are not easily arrived at, and particularly not by older generations. The dynamic for this new human adventure, for this great new departure from current directions, must come from youth. Paradoxically, it will be the lack of experience of the younger generation that will permit it to lead. Because many of the problems we face today are unprecedented, perhaps our greatest peril is to assume that we can approach them on the basis of past experience. Your responsibilities as the new generation of decision-makers

demand that you study the future, not the past. It may have been wise advice for Sir Francis Bacon to urge that his contemporaries "leave the future to the divine Providence," but no longer. Bacon lived, after all, 3½ centuries before Los Alamos, acid rain, and South-North debt figures of a trillion dollars or more.

Better by far, I urge, to heed the advice of that most wise of Parliamentarians, Edmond Burke. He argued: "You can never plan the future by the past."

I am not suggesting that all values are to be ignored, that all accomplishments are to be denied. That would be as impossible as it would be foolish. Required, however, is something almost as radical, and certainly as challenging. It is to introduce and to acknowledge a series of dualities which together will strengthen the matrix of human integrity. The first of these is the link between our biosphere and our future. Selfish exploitation of non-renewable resources, thoughtless discharge of toxic effluents and pollutants, careless disregard of the needs of all living species - these are the guarantors of environmental destruction. Conservation is not an

accomplishment to be applauded; it is a duty to be observed. More than a century ago the great English social commentator and theorist John Ruskin recognized this. Said he:

"God has lent us the earth for our life; it is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who are to come after us; and we have no right, by anything that we do or neglect to do, to involve them in unnecessary penalties, or deprive them of benefits which are theirs by right."

Another duality is found in the link between arms expenditures and economic development. The Palme Commission established beyond question that the weapons burden now is straining even the wealthiest of economies. Increasingly, the stability of states and societies, irrespective of ideology or system of government, is threatened by the mindless pursuit of a weapons superiority that is as unattainable in practice as it is crippling in expense. And all the while the spectre of a nuclear holocaust becomes ever more possible. There is no simple

debit-credit transfer mechanism to shift funds from one column to another - from defense to social purpose . Nevertheless, the economically non-productive role played by heavily armed standing armies in so many developing countries, and by defence industries in so many industrialized countries, must be recognized and changed.

The linkage between the destinies of countries North and South is a third duality that is slowly gaining recognition but at a pace that is as yet too slow to avoid disaster. "Interdependence" has become part of the international vocabulary. It has not yet made the transition from noun to verb, however. Too many persons in the North still regard this equation as one of simplistic dimensions. They ignore the evidence that we have entered an age in which we all gain, or we all lose. In the result to date, the world economic situation is caught in a downward spiral, deteriorating apace in all geographic sectors, and threatening conflict and catastrophe in many. Equally hazardous, many countries either ignore or fail in their endeavours to marry growth with equity. Economic disparity within a country is as evil and unacceptable as that between countries.



Easily said, all of that. Not much originality, either. What next, though? Is there a formula that can convey a recognition of these dualities into a preferred future? Is there some way in which we can convince ourselves, and just possibly others, that no activity or undertaking is of value unless it contributes to human dignity? Can we remind ourselves continuously that the family of man knows no geographic or ideologic boundaries? Can we commit to memory the burning commentary of Mahatma Gandhi, observing in South Africa the impact of apartheid, "It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings."

I'm far from certain of the answers to any of those questions. I am very certain, however, that we have no option but to try. We are all occupants of a single planet, and there is none other available to which we can flee.

The mechanism for insight, for understanding, for change will be - as it always has been in all societies - of a cultural nature. Art speaks for all of us. If

development does not reflect the cultural base of a society, it will not last; if international relations are not tempered by cultural expression, there is the danger of recurring xenophobia.

In an age when governments seem unable effectively to communicate, it is a joy to witness the frontier-leaping ability of cultural phenomena. Modern technology has conveyed the songs of Abba from Stockholm to Jakarta, blue jeans from Dallas to Nairobi, and VCRs from Tokyo to Caracas. Even the MacKenzie Brothers from somewhere to somewhere else. If human concerns are to gain predominance over ideology, this marriage of culture and technology must be encouraged and stimulated. Here especially is the role of youth critical, for it is a mistake to assume that cultural expression is somehow internationally homogenous. All too often the North has been projecting to the South images and signals so seductive in nature that the recipients fail to recognize any negative elements related to their origins. That is dangerous.

As well, it is increasingly easy instinctively to blur or diminish the richness of diversity and cultural

pluralism and to idolize a single source model. That is a crying shame.

If we lose pride in our own national cultures, we will at once have lost confidence in ourselves and have weakened our chance to develop self-sustaining elements in our societal structure. Building a nation or developing a society is not an easy task. If all that were required were to import some vibrant external model, there are one or more societies in today's world that would happily oblige as self-proclaimed ideal images. If we refuse to recognize that our own cultures must be reflected in our economic and political activities, we are building in a guarantee of their ineffectiveness. If we possess no vibrant culture or, even worse, possessing it, have no confidence in it, then all our achievements in other sectors will be of fleeting duration.

Confidence and vigour are essential elements of any enduring society. Without either, there is little chance for accomplishment. In his monumental work, "Civilization", Kenneth Clark speaks of "confidence in the society in which one lives, belief in its philosophy, belief

in its laws, and confidence in one's own mental powers...."

Again, "vigour, energy, vitality: all the great civilisations have had a weight of energy behind them."

Clark says "People sometimes think that civilisation consists in fine sensibilities and good conversation and all that. These can be among the agreeable results of civilisation, but they are not what make a civilisation...."

Confidence, of course, contains a future ingredient. It means that we undertake today activities which cannot mature for some time to come. It means we understand development to be investment - the postponement of advantage today in favour of enhanced benefit tomorrow. Should that confidence be replaced with doubt or fear - fear of economic uncertainty, fear of war, fear of famine, fear of the unknown - then development ceases. Crops are not planted, buildings are not constructed, songs are not composed. And, increasingly, research is not conducted. For, of all human endeavours, research is surely one of the essentially future-oriented pursuits. Research seeks answers to problems: answers which will permit wise development or investment decisions to be taken. And it is here that confidence and vigour, culture and technology, all

come together. Research that does not take place within a society produces results that are as alien as coconuts growing in Baffin Island. Research which is not vigorous in its methodology makes no more sense than cheating at solitaire.

It is research, of course, that IDRC supports. One ingredient in the search for a preferred future. For a better world. For a world in which those of you who have made a personal commitment to international awareness and international understanding will have an opportunity to join with your peers from all regions, from Commonwealth countries and non-Commonwealth countries, to live lives of fulfilment and dignity. That's a demanding challenge and a goal worthy of the greatest of efforts.

Truth and honesty in how you think, speak and act; confidence in yourselves and your culture; understanding of human beings elsewhere - these are the messages I wish you to take away from here. The world desperately needs people who are courageous enough to demand of themselves and of others those standards of excellence.

One Canadian who fitted that description was that great scholar Marshall McLuhan, the man who coined the phrase "The Global Village." Another equally courageous and equally brilliant Canadian was Frank Scott - scholar, civil libertarian, poet. I'd like to finish by quoting one of his poems. It appeals to me as kind of a benediction for your conference, for this evening in Ottawa, and for my Scandinavian body clock:

"The world is my country  
The human race is my race  
The spirit of man is my God  
The future of man is my heaven."

Thank you, and best wishes to all of you.